

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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"THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN."

By RITA.

Author of "Dame Durden," "Gretchen," "Darby and Joan," "Sheba," etc., etc.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I. ATHOLE'S JOURNAL.

"THE greater part of life is made up of failures and mistakes."

I was reading that in a book the other day. The sentence has haunted me ever since. Is it true? If so, how sad it sounds!

I am not of the opinion of the country woman who said a certain aphorism must be true because she had seen it "in print"; but I cannot help fancying that there must be some hidden meaning, some sad or bitter experience of the writer's own life, underlying an expression that haunts one as one lays down the volume that contained it.

And all day, as I have looked across the wide moorland, or watched the sunlight on the glancing waters of the loch, and the clouds that change from grey to purple and gold, those words have been ringing in my ears, and sounding like a knell of doom in my heart.

For fully, and frankly, and without disguise, I confess to myself that their truth has struck home, that my life is one of those made up of failures and mistakes. Or is it not rather one great failure—a record of that irrevocable mistake that again and again women have suffered for—a loveless and unsuitable marriage?

If my unhappiness is of the passive order, yet none the less it is unhappiness.

There is the sense of being in the wrong place; of utter want of sympathy with my surroundings; of absolute incapacity to interest myself in the domestic details that my mother-in-law finds so all-engrossing, or the farm news, and shooting and fishing triumphs of the Laird.

I have been married nearly two years, and I am deadly sick of Corriemoor and its way of life. I know the plan of every day—I might almost say of every hour. The few people who call on us, or with whom we exchange visits, are all, it seems to me, cut out on one pattern of conventionality. The men talk of their tenants or the prospects of the moors, with an occasional dash at politics, or a religious controversy, arising from some disputed text or point of doctrine, and drink copiously of whisky, the very sight and smell of which I loathe. The women discuss their household affairs, their neighbours and their doings, and patiently wait till their lords and masters have finished their libations, and are prepared to escort them to their respective abodes.

There are no young people with whom I can associate, nor does it seem to occur to Mrs. Campbell that I am quite out of my element with these dowagers and matrons. They look upon me as a somewhat flighty and graceless person, and are fond of delivering lectures and counsels, to which I listen with amusement or irritation, according to my mood.

Only once have I been permitted to ask Bella to stay with me, and I think even her irrepressible spirits and bright geniality suffered under the general depression that reigned in the household.

As the months drifted by, and my little dead child was taken from me and laid in the desolate moorland churchyard, I

grew more and more restless and unhappy. In vain I tried to assure myself that things would improve, or that I should settle down into "my groove." They grew steadily worse.

My husband was kind; but he was not companionable, and certainly not observant. It never seemed to occur to him that I could possibly be dissatisfied with my life at Corriemoor, or find it anything but delightful. His mother had lived there ever since her married life began, and his grandfather's wife before her, and another generation or two, no doubt, antedated their advent. The young generation were expected to follow in the footsteps of those older and wiser members of the family. I dared not say that the sameness, the deadly dulness of the routine were oppressing me to such a degree that at times I was almost urged to outspoken rebellion.

The weather, too, was particularly dreary. It rained incessantly throughout the summer, and the disconsolate grey landscape, the dripping trees, and the lowering sky did not form an inspiring prospect—much as I had heard about the never-failing beauty of Corriemoor.

Perhaps the leaven of my own discontent had entered into everything; but try as I might, I could not make mind, feeling, tastes, and inclinations fit into the groove laid down for them.

It needs the harsher discipline of life to teach one patience and forbearance; but I was young, passionate, enthusiastic, and therefore fitted my surroundings about as well as the proverbial "peg" in its square hole.

I knew that there were people who would have been perfectly happy in my position; but I chafed like a restive steed under the perpetual restraint imposed on mind, word, and feeling. I could not interest myself in my neighbours' concerns, though they were good enough to take an extraordinary interest in mine.

If one has any sense of the picturesque, the romantic, the dramatic, one cannot help trying to fit surroundings and associations accordingly; but my efforts were vain, and my figures nothing but "lay-figures" of the very heaviest and prostest type.

So in gloom, and heaviness, and depression, the months dropped one by one into the lap of the past, and I was only aroused out of my long apathy by a sudden and terrifying summons from Grannie.

She was dangerously ill—dying they said—and her one cry was for me.

The Laird took me to Iverness straightway, and left me in the little hushed house that seemed so homelike and so dear.

Grannie was very ill—the doctor almost despaired of her—but she took "a turn," as they said, very soon after my arrival, and in three weeks' time was convalescent. I stayed on; I was in no hurry to return to Corriemoor, and its gloom and loneliness.

At Craig Bank I felt at home. Some one or other of the Camerons was perpetually dropping in. Bella and I shared the duties of nursing between us. There was sunshine, and air, and exercise, and pleasant companionship for me, and as a flower expands and rejoices in a congenial atmosphere, so I grew brighter, happier, more content, and the change soon made itself apparent in my looks, and manners, and habits, as Bella speedily remarked.

"Such a queer bit creature," she said, in her merry teasing way; "lifting its head like a flower after rain, because it's petted, and spoiled, and fussed over! But what had they done to you, Athole?" she added, more gravely. "You looked just broken down when you came here. Aren't you happy, dearie?"

The old fond word, the old fond tones—they almost broke me down.

I shook my head.

"I'm as happy as I can expect to be," I said, "if there is any meaning in the word—which I sometimes doubt. But my life is very dull and depressing, Bella. That is the honest truth."

"Well, they are rather old fogies for you, my pet. I wish I were a bit nearer and could run over and have a chat with you every day."

"So do I," I echoed, heartily. "My mother-in-law and the Laird are not the liveliest company in the world."

"But you have your books, your music!" she said.

"They hate to see me reading, and they only like me to play Scotch music," I answered, gloomily. "Mrs. Campbell thinks I ought to be always at needlework, and you know I detest it!"

"Yes, I know," she said, with a humorous twinkle in her bright eyes. "I mind well the lazy wee lassie who would not put stitch or seam to gown for any coaxing. But, as you're a rich, fine lady

now, surely you have a maid to do your sewing?"

"Oh, yes; but still, Mrs. Campbell thinks I ought to do a good deal myself."

"But surely you're mistress, Athole, and can do what you like? You mustn't let the old lady rule you in everything."

"I'm afraid she's rather what you would call a 'managing' person, Bella," I said, ruefully. "I began by giving in to her, and begging her to keep the position of mistress, and she means to do so, I can see."

Bella shook her head deprecatingly.

"I told you that was a bad plan."

"But what could I do?" I urged. "I was too young and too ignorant to take my place as the head of the household. Besides, it would have been worse to have had her watching and criticising all my blunders. As it is, at least, she has occupation, and I am saved the scoldings that I hear lavished on Jean, and Mag, and Janet perpetually."

"I'm afraid you're not quite happy, Athole?" she said, gently.

I felt the tears rise to my eyes.

"Oh, my dear," I said, "who in this world can expect to be that? There must always be shadow to sunlight; a cross, a drawback, a want unsupplied. I am as well off as most people—better, perhaps, than many; I ought not to be discontented. The pebble in my shoe is a very small one."

"But there should be no pebble at all," she said. "Even a small one makes the foot sore when the journey is long."

"Perhaps," I said, drearily, "my journey may not be very long. Sometimes I pray so."

She turned away somewhat abruptly. For that night we talked no more of Corriemoor, or my life there.

Grannie's health steadily improved, and the Laird's letters began to suggest my return. I was in no hurry to notice his hints; I felt a growing disinclination to go back to the prison-house I loathed after this unexpected spell of liberty. Bella, I fear, somewhat encouraged my insubordination; we were so happy together; we had such innocent jests and jokes, such long, delicious walks, such tender, half-spoken confidences.

Kenneth came up from Edinburgh for a week; I had not seen him since I married; he was very much altered—grave, reticent,

self-important. He had given himself up heart and soul to his studies and profession, and was everywhere spoken of with the Scotch measure of cautious praise, as "likely to do well."

We did not get on at all, he and I; I disliked the masterful importance of his newly-acquired manner; and he, to all intents and purposes, had not approved of my marriage, and was fond of making disparaging remarks concerning the Laird and affairs at Corriemoor generally. I was not sorry when he left. I had but four days more of liberty, and then I must leave Craig Bank; an imperative summons had reached me, and I knew that excuses could no longer avail.

One afternoon I had left Grannie asleep, and was hurrying along the High Street on my way to the Camerons. It was a dull, misty day, with lowering sky that threatened rain, and a piercing easterly wind that made me draw my warm cloak closely round me as I walked along.

The street was almost deserted. I saw but two figures in the whole length of the thoroughfare. They were approaching me from the opposite direction. Suddenly, something in the walk, height, bearing of one of them struck me as familiar. My heart gave one quick leap; the blood seemed to rush in a burning torrent to my face; my feet refused to stir.

Were not the seas between us? Had we not said good-bye for ever? Yet, surely, fancy was playing me no trick now.

Dizzily, stupidly, I tried to collect my wits, to pass on quietly and unconcernedly with but one glance, that seemed rather to defy than to court recognition. In vain. A start, a husky cry—the cry of an emotion, strong and swift as pain, and sorrow, and memory could make it, and then my hand was clasped in the warm strong clasp of old, and once more I stood, pale and trembling, in the presence of Douglas Hay!

CHAPTER II.

TWO YEARS—AND AFTERWARDS.

Two years—two years of trial, suffering, weariness, rolled back as a scroll before flame. My heart, which had so long forgotten to feel glad, fluttered like a bird at sound of that voice speaking my name. The blood that had known no change in its even flow coursed madly and wildly

through my veins, as once again I met those eyes that had been the only lover's eyes to me.

What mattered that we had parted in anger? What mattered bitterness, pride, distrust, coldness? One unguarded moment had bereft me of all composure, and I stood face to face with just the one being in the world who had power to so move and discompose me; truth speaking out in face, and eyes, and trembling voice—truth that defied all effort at coldness.

He was equally agitated. The colour faded from his face; his eyes spoke of pain and gladness both; the hand that clasped mine trembled like a weak girl's; the very accents of his voice were unsteady.

With a strong effort I gained my self-control. I saw the keen eyes of the stranger, who was with Douglas, watching us both intently.

I expressed surprise at seeing him back in Scotland. For two years no word of him had reached me. I imagined he was still in Canada.

"But I have never been to Canada at all," he said. "Is it possible you did not hear that I was shipwrecked?"

"I have heard nothing," I answered, simply. "I live so far away, and news travels slowly."

"True—I—I forgot," he said, huskily. "Your home is at Corriemoor. Are you staying long in Inverness?"

"Three days more," I said, quietly. "Grannie has been very ill, and she sent for me to nurse her. I have been at Craig Bank for the last six weeks. When did you arrive?"

"Only yesterday," he said; and then, apparently remembering his companion, he introduced him to me by the name of "Mr. Huel Penryth."

A strange name, I thought, and a strange man, too. My first impression of him was not favourable; the face was a powerful one, but stern and cold, with dark, inscrutable eyes, that read more than they revealed. The wild, thick hair, streaked with grey, fell back from a broad and heavily-lined brow. Care, and suffering, and endurance had left their mark upon this man; so much even my inexperienced eyes could tell.

He raised his hat with grave politeness as I bowed in answer to Douglas's hurried murmur, and as I met his glance it seemed to me that he had read my secret, and was speculating as to its future bearing on my life. I could not have explained why I

felt this, but the consciousness was so acute that I could almost have fancied it had flashed from brain to brain as the electric current flies from one centre of active force to another.

He spoke, and his voice held a charm that could not be gainsaid—full, rich, and with a melancholy sweetness of intonation. I found myself listening to the sound even more than to the words, and they were not mere conventional words either. He briefly conveyed the history of that shipwreck, and the friendship that had been born of mutual hardship, endurance, and companionship.

It was the history of those two blank years, summed up and presented to me with an elaborate simplicity that yet seemed to lack no detail.

Douglas showed signs of impatience.

"Where are you bound for?" he asked, at last. "We are keeping you standing in the cold all this time."

I mentioned my destination, and they both turned and walked with me.

How strange it seemed—how strange I felt! I was as one in dreamland—haunted by past visions that were floating and centring themselves in the present. A word, a glance, a smile, and how much was said and recalled!

Timidly I glanced at Douglas's face from time to time. How altered it was! All the boyishness and youth had fled—it was stern and grave, and had lost much of the bright colouring and animation which had lent it so great a charm. But instinctively I felt that it had gained in expression and character far more than it had lost in youth and gaiety.

We met on very different ground to that on which we had parted; yet I think that the memory of that parting was keenly with us both—I had been so hard and unforgiving; he so sad and so remorseful. But all was altered now—we were boy and girl no longer. Life had grown of interest and importance to him, and had surrounded me with duties and responsibilities; yet it was hard to put the new personality in place of the old—to see only Mrs. Campbell of Corriemoor in the Athole Lindsay of both our memories. I noticed he never addressed me by my married name. I felt inclined to ask him when and how he had heard of that event; but somehow I could not frame the words, and I therefore talked, or tried to talk, of mere conventional matters connected with mutual friends and mutual memories.

We reached the Camerons' house, and I paused at the gate.

"I shall call on them in the course of a day or two," said Douglas; "not this morning. Do you think," he added, hesitatingly, "that Mrs. Lindsay would be well enough to see me if I paid her a visit?"

"She would be very pleased, I am sure," I answered; "she comes downstairs now every afternoon."

Then we shook hands once more, and they turned down the street while I went into Aunt Cameron's domicile. The girls were round me in a moment, full of eager curiosity. They had seen me and my two companions from the window.

Was that really—surely it could not be Douglas Hay? How old and altered he was! how tall he looked! and who was his friend? and so on, and so on. Their merry chatter, their incessant questioning, jarred on me at times; but I did my best to satisfy their curiosity, adding that Douglas Hay himself would be round to see them in a day or two.

After a while the younger girls drifted away to their usual duties or occupations; Bella and I were alone.

There was a space of silence—then her bright, dark eyes met mine with grave scrutiny.

"How did you feel?" she asked, abruptly. "It was rather—unexpected."

"That," I said, with a faint laugh, "was just what I felt. You could not have expressed it better."

"And you don't mind—you can be friends?" she persisted. "I am rather sorry he came here. What brought him?"

"Paternal affection, no doubt," I said. "He came to see his father."

"Of course he had heard of your marriage? Who told him?"

"He mentioned Corriemoor as my place of abode," I said; "but I did not ask who was his informant."

She was silent for a moment. Then she came to me, quite suddenly, and folded her arms about me, and drew me to her dear, true heart.

"Oh, my dearie," she said; "don't speak in that hard, cold way to me. Have I not known it all—have I not seen you fighting your battle, month by month, year by year? And hasn't it wrung my heart again and again to watch the change in your wee face—that has grown so sad and weariful of late? But I'd be no true friend to you, Athole, if I did not speak

the plain truth now. There is far more danger in your meeting with Douglas Hay than ever there was before. It is wiser to recognise a temptation than to believe in one's power of resistance when the danger comes. You will promise me not to see him or meet him, won't you, dear? You'll only be laying up fresh unhappiness for yourself if you do. Mind—I speak plainly—it is not as if your marriage had contented you; and he will watch that very keenly, and, if he still cares——"

"Oh, Bella! But that is all over long, long ago," I interrupted.

"Love is a hard thing to kill," she said. "There is just one final ending to it; but neither you nor he touched that."

"I think," I said, coldly, "there is nothing to fear now, Bella, not on either side. Even if there were—— Well, I am here but three days more. After that, I shall probably never see him again."

"I hope so," she said, earnestly. "I hope it all the more because I know how useless are warnings, counsels, efforts, in a case like this. I never had a high opinion of Douglas Hay's character, as you know; but that does not prevent my seeing that he is very attractive and very fascinating."

"That," I said, "could never tempt me again—nothing in that way; I want something deep, real, strong—something to lean on and depend on. I suppose," I added, with a little bitterness, "it sounds very shocking to say such a thing, but I should like to have liberty to experiment on different people, and see how they affect me, or I them. It seems as if life hampered us so dreadfully; we can't really know each other; we can't say what our real feelings or natures are unless they are tested. I seem to know people so little, and yet I always want to get below the surface, to reach something that will respond and answer to my own appeal, my own need. But I never can—I never can."

She was silent. Presently she said:

"That is an odd fancy on your part, Athole. I don't wonder you are unhappy; you ask too much of life, and feel too deeply."

"Perhaps that is so," I answered. "I am not happy, I am not contented, and I am not good. Yet I might be all; and I long to be, very often. I wonder where the secret of my failure lies? In myself, of course. But how can I comprehend or reach it? One's inner nature is always

more or less of a mystery. When I think of what I am, and what I want, of the intense longings for a fuller and deeper life, the perpetual rebellion against my groove, I feel tempted to do something desperate. I only act and react upon myself. No wonder I feel storm-beaten."

"It seems strange to look at you, and then hear you talk like this," said Bella, thoughtfully. "If your life was more active you would be less morbid."

"My life is destined to be always as it is now, I fear," I answered, drawing away from her arms at last. "It is my only comfort to have you to talk to, Bella. I think no one else understands me, or—or cares very much."

"Your husband cares for you, dearie. He is grave and serious, and perhaps he seems cold; but he is so good."

"Oh, I know that," I answered. "It is my own ceaseless reproach. Sometimes I think that I must be very ungrateful, very wicked; but I can't help it; I can't alter myself, as I said before. If I could——"

"Well!" she said, looking at me gravely, and with a little troubled pucker of her white, smooth brow.

"Oh," I said, laughing, "I would turn myself into Meg, or Jean, of course, with no thought beyond the 'kye at the byrne,' and the stocking-knitting for the household. How I envy the dull, commonplace content of such lives!"

"I'm sure you don't—not really," said Bella, with energy. "But my opinion is you want rousing—a change. Why can't you get the Laird to take you away? He went abroad once, and he told me he enjoyed it very much. Why shouldn't he go again?"

I laughed as I remembered some passages of that foreign tour, and the passive composure and grim endurance which Donald had displayed.

"If he told you so," I answered, "be very sure he did not mean it. He hates foreign travel and foreign ways; even foreign scenery could only wring a reluctant admission from his lips that it was 'no' that bad.' I believe he thinks Nature quite incapable of favouring any land but Scotland. Oh, dear," I added with a weary sigh, "how hard it is to be fettered and hampered like this, to be a prisoner with one's chains always weighing one down! Now, if only you and I could go off together, Bella, that would be some fun, wouldn't it? And though there's no reason why we shouldn't, yet just picture

to yourself the outcry that would arise at the bare suggestion. How all our Scotch Mrs. Grundys would hold up their hands in righteous horror at the 'impropriety'! Oh! how I envy American girls; they do get some enjoyment out of life and youth; and I'm sure they're not a bit the worse for it."

"I never met one," said Bella, with a gravity that set me off laughing. "But they're rather bold and forward, are they not?"

"I never found them so, and I've come across plenty in my travels," I said. "Very free and independent, if you like, and as a rule far better educated than English girls. At least they talk better, and seem to be at home on most subjects. They are far more brilliant and amusing than girls of any other nation."

"But not nearly so refined or well-bred," persisted Bella.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"That means not so dull, or repressed, or conventional. Of course their manners and habits are very different to ours; but I always found them interesting."

"Well," said Bella, laughing, "I almost wish we could turn ourselves into American girls for the time being, and go off on a 'foreign tour' as you suggest. I've always been crazy to go abroad; but I might as well ask for the moon as for permission to do it, or opportunity even if I had the permission."

"Well, I must go back now," I said, with a sigh. "Come round this evening, Bella, if you've nothing to do. It's so dull when Grannie goes to bed."

"Certainly, I'll come," she said, briskly. "Must you really go back to Corriemoor on Saturday?"

"No help for it," I answered. "But I really don't see why I shouldn't take you back with me, dear."

"Mrs. Campbell doesn't like me," she said, laughing. "I'm not staid enough, or grave enough, I fancy."

"Never mind Mrs. Campbell," I said. "Surely I may be permitted a little independence. The Laird is coming here for me. I'll tell him you will return and stay a few weeks with us. May I?"

"Now, A'hole, you know well that I'm always happy to be with you; but——"

"No buts, no buts!" I cried, putting my hands to my ears. "I'll settle all the 'pros and cons,' and you pack your box. You needn't be particular; anything does for Corriemoor."

THE GUELPHS.

WE are not to speak or write of the House of Hanover any more, it seems, still less of Brunswick, when alluding to our ruling dynasty—henceforth they are to be known as the Guelphs. And this is not such a pretty name as Stuart or Tudor, at least, in its present form. But it would look and sound much better if we reverted to the original Teutonic spelling, and made it Welf, or even Wolf. The "House of the Wolf" has a fine, romantic sound about it, and we may guess that in the distant ages to which the pedigree of our Royal line conducts us, the wolf was the "totem" of the chieftains of some warlike tribe, who, after long and painful wanderings, descended at last—the date necessarily uncertain—into the fertile Saabian land. They may have fought at Troy, they may have warred with Medes and Persians against Babylon and Nineveh. Pretty certainly they had something to say about the fall of Rome, and were quite an established family, with a position of their own, when Charlemagne ruled the Western World. Indeed, there is no Royal or princely house anywhere that can show such an authentic history and genealogy, stretching backwards to times so remote. The House of Capet is but a mushroom compared with the Guelphs, the Hapsburgs mere roturiers, the Hohenzollerns people of yesterday.

With the Guelphs, family tradition ends in folk-lore, for distinctly of that order is the story of the origin of the family name as given in the catalogue of the newly opened Guelph Exhibition, at the New Gallery in Regent Street. The heroine of the tale is Hildegard, the wife of Sir Isenbart, son of a worthy Count at the Court of Carloman—a wife who was herself a sister of Hildegard, the consort of the great Emperor. To punish her for a certain freedom of opinion against physiological speculations, she was doomed to be the mother of twelve, not consecutively and in due order, which might have been endured, but all at a birth—a whole litter of children, in fact. As if they had really been pups, Hildegard picked out one, and ordered the rest into a basket, and so to the river. But the father met the good nurse, and asked her what she was carrying, when she replied, "Whelps for drowning." But the cries of the babes reached the father's ears; he rescued the

brood, and in memory of the event he named the eldest of them—was he in the basket, and how was his precedence ascertained among so many! These points are left doubtful. But anyhow, from this time, A.D. 820, the family has flourished under its present title, allowing for the ignorance of the Italians of the virtues of a W, and the consequent transformation of the name into Guelph.

After this it is disappointing to find that the line of Guelph ended in a female somewhere about the time of Edward the Confessor, and were merged in the powerful family, d'Este, which, after all, if genealogists are to be believed, is the veritable patronymic of our Queen. And the d'Estes have a pedigree which vies with that of the Guelphs, although it only goes back to the somewhat mythical times of the early Roman Kings. But when the family come into our horizon it is not their early history that interests us, so much as their connection with the line of Stuart. To them, as to the Stuarts, the crown "came with a lass," a very vigorous and virile lass, the daughter of Elizabeth, that Queen of Bohemia who, after the restoration of her nephew, Charles the Second, lived for a time near the bottom of Drury Lane, in the Strand, and subsequently in Leicester Square. And as Sophia, Electress of Hanover, the lass takes her proper place as number one in the catalogue, in a not very convincing portrait, with something of a Wardour Street air about it. More interesting and characteristic is a good portrait of the unhappy Sophia Dorothea of Zell, the wife of our George the First, and the ancestress of the Royal line, the story of whose intrigue with the handsome Count Konigsmark—brother of that other wicked one who contrived the death of Tom Thynne in Pall Mall—was so brutally arranged by the assassination of the Count, and the immuring of the poor Princess in lifelong confinement. Her name at the foot of the picture has been covered with gold leaf—blotted out, in fact, typically as well as in reality. Yet now that we have made the acquaintance of Sophia Dorothea, her face is not one that inspires confidence; her eyes are those of an intriguer, and the artist, whoever he may have been, has caught the baleful light of one who is ruled by disordered passions. But perhaps the artist painted after the event, and put it—the light, that is—there on purpose.

There is another Sophia Dorothea,

daughter of the last; Queen of Prussia, and the mother of Frederick the Great; but a woman of most forbidding presence, a fact which may palliate, if not excuse, the extreme aversion her husband showed for her. The son of the first-mentioned Sophia is Dapper George, the second of that name, the hero of Dettingen—a very valorous and magnanimous little gentleman, the hero of Dettingen—but for us better known as the hero of one or two little stories about the London Parks. The King, one day seeing the gatekeeper turn away some chance visitors from the Royal gardens, indignantly ordered their admittance. "My beople," he said, proudly, "shall go where zey please." And in the same generous spirit, when the head gardener complained of the damage done to some of his choice plants by a heedless public, George replied, laconically, "Plant more."

This is the Prince who is handed down to us by essayists and historians as one who hated "boetery and bainting"; and at whom Pope takes a slash in "The Dunciad":

Still Duncce the second reigns like Duncce the first.

Assuredly, he was not a Mæcenas for the arts, neither was his minister, Sir Robert Walpole, whose acquaintance we may make in a good portrait by Charles Jervas, which shows the jovial, cynical, sensual face of the Norfolk squire, whom keen good sense and instinct made the great minister of a great kingdom. Walpole is also well represented in an interesting picture, partly by Hogarth, and partly by his father-in-law, Thornhill, showing a little bit of the House of Commons, with the stout, jolly minister in a blue ribbon, talking eagerly with Mr. Speaker Onslow—probably on some point of procedure, for the Clerk of the House turns round to have a word in the discussion. The dramatic action of the piece is very characteristic of Hogarth, to whom the three principal portraits are doubtless due, while Thornhill probably supplied the furniture and accessories, including the rows of sturdy Members in cocked hats.

Even more interesting than King or Minister is Caroline, the Queen, whose hardy, enduring character and cynical wit make her memorable. But her brightness and readiness are not apparent in her portrait by Hudson, where she appears fat and heavy, leaning upon the shoulder of her son, the future

"butcher of Culloden"! Her favourite, and equally cynical, correspondent, Lord Hervey, we shall find in the balcony—just such a finical figure in white velvet, as we might expect from Pope's description:

Let Sporus tremble!

Sporus, that mere white curd of asses' milk.

Pretty Molly Lepel the poet's friend, is not represented, nor are any of the chief beauties of the Court; not Mrs. Howard, the lively hostess of Pope and Swift at Marble Hill, and who, with Queen Caroline, appears for a moment in the "Heart of Mid-Lothian"; nor yet the Bellendens—

Madge Bellenden, the fairest of the land,
And smiling Mary, soft and fair as down.

But if we miss the beauties, we have the poets who flattered and followed them. In another room we shall find Mat Prior and Alexander Pope, two excellent portraits by Kneller, probably the best of the artist's works; and John Gay is there by an unknown hand; and we have Jonathan Swift, by Jervas, from the Bodleian, to complete the party.

Another well-known figure of the period is the Princess Amelia, daughter of George the Second, an early example of what we call a fast young lady, who rode, drove, dined, hunted, and played cards with the best, and who lived to an advanced age—a hard-featured, snuffy old woman, who to the last cared more for kennel and stables than for gilded saloons. Of her brother—"poor Fred," hated by father and mother—we have two portraits in youth, but neither very characteristic. Nor does his wife, the Princess Augusta, by Zoffany, with her family about her, including George, the future King, leave any distinct impression. But the same George the Third is a splendid youth as painted by Reynolds, just before his accession—a frank, noble, perhaps stupid, boy, just such a gay lover as rode one day by Holland Park, lighted by the fire of love for Lady Sarah Lennox, who was making hay on the lawn.

But when we come to Sir Joshua Reynolds's period, the whole age seems lighted up by his genius, and the wealth of examples of this great master is the great feature of this Exhibition, just as Holbein was of the Tudors. Facing us, as we enter the south gallery, is the master's great picture of Sarah Siddons as

the Tragic Muse—a noble, inspired, if somewhat idealised, portrait of that great actress and noble woman. And what a lovely face—lovely enough to give one the heartache—is that of another actress, “Mrs. Elizabeth Hartley as Elfrida”! No goddess or muse, indeed, but most charming among women! Here, too, we have lovely Perdita, too—Mary Robinson—of unhappy memory.

Then, among actors, we have David Garrick—not, perhaps, in the artist’s best manner. But we have another portrait of Garrick by Hogarth, when the actor appears as author, tickled, apparently, by his own conceit—for he has a broad smile on his face—while his wife leans over him with a very engaging, arch expression, about to take the pen from his fingers.

“A very thoughtless proceeding,” pronounces a determined-looking critic, who is accompanied by his wife, and who, perhaps, wishes to guard against a similar indiscretion on her part. “A very thoughtless act, indeed; she is sure to ink his fingers.” Here is surely a tribute to the vivid action of the piece, where, if the painter has hardly succeeded with David, he has thrown wonderful life and spirit into the female figure; and after leaving the picture you may feel that you have seen and known Mrs. Garrick.

Garrick suggests Johnson, of whom we have another Reynolds, but not a success as a portrait, and close by we have Goldsmith—a picture which, reproduced in hundreds of prints and engravings, has made poor Goldy’s features familiar to all the world. Other literary clubbites by the same hand are the much overrated Edmund Burke and James Boswell, Johnson’s inimitable biographer. Burly Gibbon, more like a grazier than a historian, is there, too, by another hand, Romney’s; and a portrait of the latter artist by himself, and one of his finest works, is close at hand.

A most brilliant portrait of a brilliant man is Sir Joshua’s Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in the prime of his glorious youth, with the humour of the “School for Scandal” curling his beautiful lips. A picture to be seen after this is the celebrated portrait, by Gainsborough, of the future Mrs. Sheridan, then Miss Linley of Bath, with her beautiful brother, full of a witching loveliness beyond which art cannot go. Then we have the melancholy picture of Sheridan in premature decline—a poor picture by Hickel, but

with “the bottle” plainly if unconsciously expressed by the artist in every feature. From Sheridan we may turn to Sheridan’s boon companion, George Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Fourth. What a splendid youth he was, with every promise for the future in his handsome and clever face! It is Gainsborough who paints him, and perhaps the portrait is too flattering. But he was a fine young fellow when he fell in love with Mrs. Fitzherbert, the one true and honest passion of his life. But contrast gentle, lovely Mrs. Fitzherbert, as Gainsborough paints her, with the coarse, brazen-looking Caroline—a bad picture from the Guildhall—and it may be seen how unhappy often enough is the lot of princes.

Of princes and princesses in their daily habit or in robes of State, with diamonds, stars and garters, and all the accessories of their condition, in the Royal room at the New Gallery, there is no end. Venerable, courtly old gentlemen survey these portraits through their gold eye-glasses. Here and there may be one of these faded Royalties who is remembered by people yet living. But among all these Royal portraits there is one honest, sensible, loving, truthful face, not wanting in softness and feminine charm, but distinguished chiefly by its intellectual and sympathetic qualities; and this is the face of the Duchess of Kent, the mother of Queen Victoria, and it is difficult to overrate the influence of this excellent woman upon the characters of her descendants of the Royal house of Guelph.

But after all it is the eighteenth century that we have here in view, and nowhere else, and probably at no other time could we find such a complete representation of the period at the hands of the greatest of its artists. The miniatures here displayed are themselves worth a careful study, as they belong to the palmy days of the most dainty and delicate of arts, and embrace nearly all the celebrated characters of the age. Relics, too, there are, although these are necessarily not so interesting as those of earlier periods. Still many people are pleased to see the cloak—if it is not rather a cape—that Wellington wore at Waterloo and his field-glass—is it possible that the great duke pranced about with a telescope like a mountain gun hanging upon him. A thousand odds and ends connected with Royalty may please others; and the love-tokens that passed between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert are not without interest.

Good English pottery, too, of the century will be an envy and delight to many.

It is all familiar ground, no doubt, this eighteenth century; we may study it in the print-shop windows—thousands of caricatures, of prints, hundreds of pictures, the labours of essayists and the lighter corps of historians, all have made the age of the Georges almost as well-known to us as our own. Put for this very reason the pleasure of a trip to Regent Street is all the greater. There are not strangers or people little known who look down upon us, their lineaments preserved by the great masters of the age. Kneller, Hogarth, Reynolds, Romney, Gainsborough. These are the great magicians who make all the dead and gone of the century alive to us once more.

What a charm there is about the women of the period! The beautiful Gunning, with all the world at their feet; the lovely Maria Walpole, afterwards peerless among countesses; that most charming of the Spencers, Lady Pembroke; Georgina of Devonshire, whose kiss given to the Westminster butcher and elector has gratified thousands; Lady Hamilton, most beautiful of women, who, beginning as a servant girl, led into willing captivity the greatest sea captain of the age; sprightly Kitty Fisher, and Harriet Mellon, lively and bustling actress, who captivated Count de la B... and died Duchess of Saint Albans.

Of the varied characters of the age, who is not pleased to meet with lifelike and authentic portraits of such as Chesterfield, of the "Letters," by Hudson; of Henry Fox; of his son, Charles James; of George Selwyn and Horace Walpole; of Canning, noble in youth as in manhood of Beckford, the magnificent; of Warren Hastings, the hero or culprit of the great trial; of Captain Bligh, the tyrant of the "Bounty," and the would-be autocrat of New South Wales; of Captain Cook, the discoverer of the Cannibal Islands! If you want a model of the old British Admiral, storming and blowing on sea and shore, there is Reynolds's admirable portrait of Boscawen for your need. And who is not pleased to make the acquaintance of Charles Dibdin, who has just the jolly, tarry flavour about him which you would have expected from his songs?

And the poets, what an admirable and instructive series we have here! Pope and his friends; woezy Thomson, of "The Seasons"; Cowper, by Romney—the face is

a revelation for much that puzzles one in the poet's life; Gray, of the *Elegy*; Macon, almost forgotten. And with these the more modern schools, Southey and Shelley; Tom Campbell, the bonny Scot; the great wizard of the North; Keats and Coleridge, the latter unexpectedly sleek and ecclesiastical in appearance.

Then we have the novelists. Richardson, of "*Clarissa*"; Fielding, of "*Tom Jones*," "*Humphrey Clinker*," "*Evelina Burney*"; William Godwin, of "*Caleb Williams*"; to say nothing of Sterne, of "*Tristram Shandy*," whose peaked and wicked-looking face not all Sir Joshua's art can make attractive.

Here, in fine, is a grand representative gathering which everybody ought to see, brought together as it is from the palaces of Royalty, from the great houses of the nobility, from halls, and colleges, and guilds, from the collections of merchant princes, and of old historic families; a gathering which can only be seen once in a lifetime, and which once dispersed, as it will necessarily be after the fourth of April, can never be brought together again in its entirety.

KING FROST.

EVEN the most argumentative person could find nothing to quarrel with in the statement that King Frost has had a "regular, downright, royal" reign this winter. He came to the throne about November the twenty-fifth, 1890, and died a quiet death, as we fondly were allowed to hope for two days, on January the twelfth, 1891. He had almost reached his Jubilee; but very few of us were sorry to believe that he should have been deposed. But it was a false and short-lived hope, and we had to begin again telling each other that it was a good old-fashioned winter, and trying to believe that we were enjoying it; while, even if we were wrapped up in warm clothes we could not get warm. And what about those whom the frost threw out of work? Surely for them King Frost must be a tyrant more cruel than almost any despot in history.

It may not be uninteresting to go through, as rapidly as possible, the records of the good old-fashioned winters, and see what they were, and how long they lasted; although we shall not find many to beat this one. In olden days the inhabitants of London did not, at all events, suffer

from the carbon-laden fogs in which we have been existing lately.

It is of no use taking very early records, for we are dealing with doubtful authority when we dabble with early times, and up to the fifteenth century there are many hard frosts chronicled. Taking the great frosts after that, the chief point of which chroniclers take notice is the freezing of the Thames. That this should happen now about London it is almost impossible to imagine—the broad spans of the bridges giving very little opportunity for the ice to collect—but in 1564, which is the first “good, old-fashioned” winter we will notice, the Thames was frozen over from London Bridge to Westminster. In this case, however, the frost was short, though severe, and only lasted a fortnight.

Stow and Hollinshed state—on the authority of Timbs’s “Curiosities of London”—that, on New Year’s Eve, “People went over and along the Thames on the ice from London Bridge to Westminster. Some played at the football as boldlie then as if it had been on the drie land; diverse of the Court, being then at Westminster, shot dailie at prickes set up upon the Thames; and the people, both men and women, went on the Thames in greater numbers than in anie street of the City of London. On the third daie of January, at night, it began to thaw, and on the fifth there was no ice to be scene between London Bridge and Lambeth, which sudden thaw caused great floods and highwaters, that bare doune bridges and houses, and drowned manie people in England.”

In 1608 there was a frost which lasted almost four months; and again the Thames was the scene of a fair. This is described in Howe’s continuation of Stow: “The 8th of December began a hard frost, and continued unto the 15th of the same, and then thawed; and the 22nd of December it began again to freeze violently, so as divers persons went half-way over the Thames upon the ice; and the 30th of December, at every ebbe, many people went quite over the Thames in divers places, and so continued until the 3rd of January.” The ice lasted till the second of February.

In 1683-1684 coaches ran on the river from Westminster to the Temple. This frost is described in Timbs’s book from various sources. Maitland says that the frost “congealed the river Thames to that degree, that another city, as it were, was

erected thereon; where, by the great number of streets and shops, with their rich furniture, it represented a great fair, with a variety of carriages, and diversions of all sorts; and, near Whitehall, a whole ox was roasted on the ice.” While Evelyn thus describes it: “The frost continuing more and more severe, the Thames before London was still planted with boothes in formal streetes, all sorts of trades and shops, furnished and all full of commodities, even to a printing presse, where the people and the ladies tooke a fancy to have their names printed on the Thames; this humour tooke so universally, that ’twas estimated the printer gained five pounds a day for printing a line onely, at sixpence a name, besides what he got by ballads, etc. . . .”

In 1740 the Thames was again frozen, and an ox was roasted whole on the ice. In this year several people seem to have lost their lives by the treacherous ice, one of whom—Doll, a noted pippin-woman—has been thus handed down to Fame:

Doll every day had walked these treacherous roads;
Her neck grew warp’d beneath autumnal loads
Of various fruit: she now a basket bore.
That head, alas! shall basket bear no more.
Each booth she frequent past, in quest of gain,
And boys with pleasure heard her thrilling strain.
Ah, Doll! all mortals must resign their breath,
And industry itself submit to Death!
The cracking crystal yields; she sinks, she dies;
Her head, chopt off from her lost shoulders, flies.
Pippins, she cried; but death her voice confounds,
And pip, pip, pip, along the ice resounds.

There was printing on the Thames in this year, as well as in 1683-4. A copy of one of the handbills then issued was recently sent by a correspondent to the “Echo,” and ran as follows:

Upon the frost in the year 1739-40.

Behold the liquid T.H.A.M.F.S now frozen oer!
That lately SHIPS of mighty Burden bore.
Here you may PRINT your Name though cannot
Write
’Cause numbed with Cold. Tis done with great
Delight.

And lay it by; That AGES yet to come
May see what THINGS upon the ICE were done.

Elizabeth and Sarah Warner,

Printed on the ICE upon the Thames at Queen-
hithes, January the 23rd, 1739-40.

In 1814 occurred a frost, which began—as we are accustomed nowadays for frosts to begin—with a dense fog. In the breaking-up of this frost several people seem to have been drowned in the Thames. Since then there have been several severe frosts, notably in 1860, but the Thames does not seem to have been completely frozen over. Of course, there are many

more severe winters chronicled, but these seem to have been the most severe. Anyhow, we need not be afraid to boast of ours of 1890-91, for we have had all traffic on the river stopped, and the tide-way itself is full of floating ice, some pieces measuring almost thirty feet long.

But there is one thing we have not suffered from up till now in London, and that is a really heavy fall of snow. It has taxed our vestries to the utmost to clear away the little we have had. Let us hope they will not be called upon to show how clever they are; but there is no good in trying to prophesy what may happen before this article appears.

But enough of records, and chronicles, and old times, and let us come down to to-day and turn our attention on a body of people who do enjoy frosts—the skaters. It has for the last few weeks seemed that every other person in the streets has been carrying skates, and is bound for some ice-bound water, whether it be the preserve of some skating club or the smallest pond.

Now skating is not, perhaps, the safest amusement in the world, and care and precautions are necessary. Help must be at hand in case there should be any accident, and though, of course, the harder and stronger the frost the thicker and safer will be the ice, still even with the hardest and strongest ice accidents will happen. In Metropolitan waters this care falls upon the Royal Humane Society instead of, as ought to be the case, on some public body, and a source of great expense the society finds it in such a winter as this. Up to the sixth of January they had paid over one hundred pounds in wages to their icemen—not a very large amount, it is true, but large for a society which is supported by voluntary contributions, and which only just pays its way.

The Royal Humane Society was instituted in 1774, "to collect and circulate the most approved and effectual methods for recovering persons apparently drowned and dead; to provide suitable apparatus in and around the Metropolis for rescuing persons from drowning; to bestow rewards for the preservation and restoration of life; and to encourage swimming exercises at public schools and training ships with reference to saving life from drowning." While of these the second is what we have most to do with at present, we may as well have a glance at the remainder. According to the last report issued, during the year five hundred and thirty-eight

persons were rewarded for saving or attempting to save life throughout the British Isles, India, and the Colonies, the rewards in all being as follows: one gold medal; fifteen silver medals with certificates; one hundred and sixty-five bronze medals with certificates; two bronze clasps; two hundred and sixteen testimonials on vellum; eighty-seven testimonials on parchment; and fifty-three pecuniary rewards with certificates. Competitions were held at twenty-eight schools in diving practice, and a silver medallion and certificate were given at each. Life-buoys and drags were maintained throughout the year, and nearly three hundred places on the Thames, the Lea, and the Regent's, Surrey, and Grand Junction Canals.

Let us now go to the Serpentine and see what preparations are made for the reception of any possible accidents. The Receiving House of the Royal Humane Society is half-way down the water on the north side, and is a nice, comfortable-looking building, but cold and bare in this wintry weather. Ringing the bell, we are admitted by the Superintendent, and can soon see the arrangements. There are two rooms for the patients—one for men, and one for women. Each room contains a bath where hot water can be obtained at a moment's notice; a bed with the mattress on; a compartment which can in the same way be heated; two or three ordinary beds; dressing gowns for the patients; and last, but not least, a table on which the patient can be laid while his arms can be worked to produce artificial respiration according to Dr. Sylvester's method. In one of the rooms lies the spare stock of icemen's uniforms—coats with badge, hats, cork jackets and hand-line.

Now let us go out into the Superintendent's office, where we can see the models of all the apparatus used in saving life from ice accidents, and from boating and bathing accidents, too; for this place is open all the year round, and the Society has the care of the bathers in the Serpentine. Each iceman has a certain beat, and is provided with a hand-ladder, which may be useful in slight accidents. In addition, round the Serpentine are placed long folding ladders, the end of which, when pushed along the ice towards a hole, drops over and hangs down into the water, thus affording any one who has had the misfortune to fall in an easy foothold.

Ordinary life-buoys, which need no description, also meet our eye, and ice-boats. These are ordinary boats, provided with three runners, so that they will rest on the top of very thin ice—indeed, the Superintendent tells us that one of these boats carrying two men will rest on one inch of ice.

The most curious things amongst these models are those of various machines for enabling the unpractised hand to throw lines to people in danger. These ingenious contrivances—whether they ever survived the test of trial does not appear—consist mostly of a line wound round a stick, to which are attached wheels or a ball, so that it may be rolled in the direction required; but it does not appear obvious what would happen if the ice were not quite smooth.

There is one more thing to look at in the office, and that is the book containing the records of skating kept by the Royal Humane Society. This book goes back as far as 1859-60, and contains a record of all accidents that have been treated by the Society's icemen since then. What a strange medley of names and of dwelling places! In one page we come across people from Drury Lane, Fulham, Hampstead, Kilburn, and Kensington! The authorities require four inches of ice on the Serpentine now before it is thrown open, but in former days they do not seem to have been so particular, and there have been days when some two or three hundred people have disported themselves on only an inch and a quarter of ice.

Another curious thing about this book is that the number of skaters has greatly increased in these later years. Perhaps we don't work quite so hard as we used, but certainly there are always plenty of working people who can apparently afford to have a day off when they want it.

Having got all we can from the Receiving House, let us go out, and, first of all, finish our inspection of the Royal Humane Society's property by going down to the Boat House. They possess three boats here for the protection of the bathers. Of these, in very hot weather, they have, between five and eight in the morning, five and six thousand, and the same number in the evening! Some few foolish souls persist in bathing all the year round, and even during the recent Arctic weather have taken their daily plunge through a hole in the ice. These boats are ordinary rowing boats, but somewhat long, having a long

platform in the stern, on which half drowned persons can be laid and operated upon immediately for resuscitation. By the boats in the Boat House hangs a stretcher for conveying persons to the Receiving House, and various drags for recovering sunken bodies—some on poles, some, like lobster-pots, a series on a line.

That is all the equipment of the Royal Humane Society, so let us take a walk round the Serpentine, and, resisting the cries of "Who'll 'ave a pair on for an hour!" take pleasure in other people's performances. What a strange medley of people! Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, gentleman, apothecary, ploughboy, thief—they are all here. And the skates they use—from the latest fashion to an old pair which looks as if it must have been the originator of all skates! Here we have a long line of men and boys in quick succession tearing along at full speed, while here we have a select family party, with a little ring swept all to themselves, which seems to be theirs alone by right of occupation. Here is a man with a circle of people round him, showing off. How pleased we all are when he makes a mistake and sits down, all unexpectedly to himself!

How good-humoured they all are! See this slide here—men, boys, and girls, all going down one after another. If one falls down, no matter. It is a case of try again, and look smiling. Here comes a girl down, but the man behind, coming like an express train after a local, helps her on, and off they go again.

So the skating and sliding goes on up till dark, and even after, up till eleven o'clock, and in the evening it is a weird sight. Most of the skaters carry torches, which, with the flare of the lamps of the "'ave a pair on brigade," make the Serpentine brighter than it is on a good many winter days. The gentleman who seizes upon you and deposits you in a chair to fix on your skates, does not have an extensive stock-in-trade—one chair and one gimlet—and the business does not seem to require a large capital. One enterprising merchant has erected two poles with a cross bar, and appears to have brought all his household goods, for he runs to two chairs, a stool, and a form. How many Lord Mayor's Shows has that form attended in its business capacity?

But it is cold standing looking on, and so we make our way home, fully assured that we English people do not take our

pleasures sadly, so far, at least, as skating goes; but merrily and cheerfully, and, to crown all, with wonderful good temper and good humour.

A NEAR SHAVE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I AM but a common man, with next to no book learnin'; certainly nothin' like as much as is wantin' to make anything proper to put in print. Nevertheless, I'm goin' to do my best to tell a story of summat that happened to me, and which, beyond all doubt, was more than a little bit out of the common run of things. And while you're listenin' to me—I mean, while you're a-readin'—you must please think of me as Amos Kerr, a rough collier, who's spent the best part of his life—boy and man—at the bottom of a coal-pit.

It ain't a cheerful sort of life, as you may easily guess; and if folks thought the matter out they'd be ready to make excuses for us, if, when we get up into the fresh air, we are a bit rougher and unstidder in our ways than most men. I don't say we're bound to be wild; but I want to put it so that you'll remember there is two sides to this question as well as to most others.

I warn't so bad a lad as some I worked among. I could drink, and swear, and gamble my money away at cards and piggin' flyin'; but for all that I might have been a great deal worse than I was if it hadn't been for Margaret Kerr, and for the great love I'd had for her ever since she had been a little toddlin' thing of eight and me a big, clumsy lad of thirteen. You see, there were five years between us, and we'd grown up as brother and sister, for her father and mine were brothers. I should like to tell you what Meg was like, only I know I couldn't never find the words that would suit her curly, chestnut hair and her big, blue eyes, and what could I say of her sweet mouth and the bloom on her soft cheeks, and the little dimple that came when she smiled; and of how she looked when I grieved her, which I did only too often from the very first; only, thank Heaven, I never vexed her so bad that she left off caring for me?

I was left an orphan at thirteen. My mother had died at my birth, and my father was killed in a Welsh colliery; so, as was nat'ral, I went to live with my uncle, who kept the "Cross Keys" inn,

at Cannock. He got me a job at the West Cannock Colliery, and so it came about that I grew up with my cousin, Margaret. My uncle, Job Kerr, was a well-doin' man. He kept his public very strict, and wouldn't encourage no evil way there. He was used to say that no honest man could hope to thrive on the money that wastrils and losels spent on makin' beasts of theirselves. And no doubt he was right, for his house had a good name, and he got on year by year, till he'd bought a bit of land out Hedgeford way and a few shares in some of the new collieries.

"It's the duty of every man to be savin'," he would say, "both as regards his old age and as regards his children. We've only got Meg left, but that don't hinder me being as careful as if all three of the bairns had lived instead of only one. Meg'll make a real tidy wife for any man—brought up as she's been—even if her husband got nothing along of her; but she won't go from her home empty-handed, and, therefore, I don't mean to give her to a man as I don't think well of."

This he said so often that I knew his sentiments off by heart, and I knew, too, that he didn't think so very well of me. No more did my aunt, who was even harder to please than him. Perhaps you'll say that I ought to have kep' straight, seein' that my lot was thrown among them as held themselves above all low ways; but accordin' to my experience, things in general, and lads in pertickler, don't always go exactly as they oughter do, in spite of all that's said to the contrary. There was plenty of evil put in my way, and, if I stood out again' it four days, there came a fifth when I made a mess o' matters.

Now, my uncle and aunt took too little account o' the good spell, and a deal too much o' those wretched times when—with a chap I liked 'ticing me along, and a chap I hated jeerin' and sneerin' at me—I did what I was sorry for afterwards, only couldn't undo. But I suppose they were pretty patient with me, for I lived over ten years in their house; which made me three-and-twenty and Maggie eighteen, and all those ten years I had gone on lovin' her more and more every day; but I had not spoken of it, for my earnin's were naught to speak of, and, as I've shown, my uncle wasn't like to have let her listen to me. Yet they let her go for a stroll with me of a Sunday evening up on to the Chase, and there we'd sit us down on the

short grass and heather, and look across at the sun setting behind the Wrekin and the little villages with a soft cloud of blue smoke over them here and there in the valley. Then I would tell Margaret all I could tell her of what had befallen me in the week, and she would talk to me as no one else had the knack, and I would walk home beside her listenin' to her and makin' up my mind to good resolves, which I didn't always keep, and which I was mortal ashamed of breakin'; but who knows what would have become of me if I had never made them?

All that time — though I often told her there was no one in the world I cared for except her, yet I never tried to win a promise from her, or to find out if she really spoke all that was in her heart when she said:

"You are the only brother I have, Amos; so I must love you as much as I should have loved the little brother and sister who died before I was born."

In the winter we used to sit together in the little room behind the bar, where only very old customers ever took the liberty of comin' — Meg with her work, and me with a book, which I used to try and spell out with a helpin' hand from her. It was my uncle who served in the bar, and my aunt helped him on a busy night. Meg never went there — that was one o' the ways she'd been brought up careful. It was her work to see to the lodgers' rooms and their cookin', when there were lodgers — which was oftener than not. She and I often had the little parlour all to ourselves, and if any one came in I was apt to feel sorely put out, as if no one else had a right there; only, nat'rally, I couldn't say aught about such a thing.

It was when Meg was about eighteen that this all began to change a little. Firstly, I could see that my aunt and uncle were gettin' shy of our walkin' about together, and were doin' all they could to hinder it, quietly; and, nextly, there came Mr. Ralph Henderson to turn everythin' topsy-turvy.

I'm not goin' to pit myself in any way agens't Mr. Henderson; if I was to, him, and perhaps others, would think I had taken leave of my senses, for he was one of the engineers at the West Can'k Colliery, while I was only a working miner. He was a man about thirty years of age, tall, and well favoured in the face and build; but, for all his fine, gentleman ways, and his smart clothes, and his carry-

all-before-him sort of air, in one thing he and I ran on the same level, only he was far behind me — yes, certainly, far behind, for he couldn't never have loved Margaret Kerr near so well as I did.

He came to West Can'k with a great notion of his own importance about him, and when some one recommended him to lodge at the "Cross Keys," he'd more'n half a mind to turn up his nose at the idea; but lodgin's bein' scarcer, he came to see about it, and once he had seen Meg, his mind was made up. He took the best bed-room, and another room to sit in, which he didn't often use, for he purferred sittin' elsewhere.

From the hour he took up his abode at the "Cross Keys" he was just what he liked to be — that is, cock of the walk. It was Mr. Henderson this, and Mr. Henderson that, and such a fuss about doin' his cookin' right, and such fads about all that had to do with him, that I was reg'lar sick of his very name. Perhaps you'll think I was jealous of him; but that wasn't it. My mind had been made up about dislikin' him as soon as I set eyes on him.

He wasn't a favoright in ginerel, neither, for he'd a hard temper and a bitter tongue. It may have been the shadow of what was to come that fell so dark betwixt me and him; I'm not cliver enough to make out sich things; but, whether or no, I took aguin' him before he ever saw Margaret, and I make no doubt he had much the same feeling for me, though he wouldn't have condescended to own it.

I'd been stiddy for a long spell then. I'd been wonderin' if, now that she and I were both of an age to think of sweet-hearting, I might work my way up a bit, so as to count for more in my uncle's sight. But when I came home night after night, and found Mr. Henderson sitting just where I used to sit, with a good cigar between his teeth — which he always asked Meg's leave to light — talking away, and makin' hisself as agreeable as never was, and lookin' at me as if he wondered how I had the cheek to come and sit down with the likes of him — then I used to have a one-toc-many sort of feelin', and after I'd eat my supper in the back place, I began to keep out of his way. I'd slink out o' the back door, and get rid of the time as best I could, and not allays to my own credit.

I needn't tell you how miserable I was in them days and nights. At my work I

went over and over the good times we'd had before Mr. Henderson got in the light, and from that to the grudge I had against him for his stuck-up ways. Then I'd puzzle my head whether Meg cared most for me or for him. With him she was rather stand-off and quiet; it was plain to see she kep' him at a distance; when he talked to her she answered him respectful, as if she allays bore in mind that he was above her in station, and when he was not there she scarce spoke of him at all. Sometimes I'd tell myself she did all this because she didn't care a rap about him, and yet couldn't venture to send him about his business; but other times I turned the matter the other way, and felt sure she fought shy of him because she thought more of him than of them as she treated freer and easier.

With sich thoughts in my head all day, I felt gloomy and sulky o' nights, and when I sneaked out o' the back door, as I've said, it was to drown them if I could, and no matter how.

At last, one wet Sunday evening in the winter, when my uncle and aunt had gone to church, and Meg was stayin' to keep house, I made up my mind that now or never the time had come for me to find out how matters were to turn betwixt us, and whether I was to be happy or miserable for the rest o' my days. Mr. Henderson was gone to Stafford for the day, so I knew as I opened the parlour door that the coast would be clear of him. There was no light in the room but the fire, which wasn't very bright, neither, and for half a minute I thought she wasn't there. But she spoke out of the duskiness near the winder.

"Come in, Amos," she said, "it's a nasty wet night outside, ain't it?"

"Why, Maggie, you're all in the dark," I said, as I groped my way past the chairs; "wouldn't it be more cheerful-like if we lit up?"

"Just as you please, Amos—if you don't think the firelight's good enough for talking by," she made answer.

Now I wanted to see her face better than I could by the flickering light o' the blaze; besides, it wasn't like her to be sittin' so—it seemed unnat'ral; so I turned on the gas and put a match to it.

"What were you doing in the dark, lassie?" I began, as I sat down beside her. It was hard to make a start on what I wanted to say—that did as well as anything else.

"I was thinkin', Amos," she said.

"And what were you thinkin' of, lassie? Was it, mayhap, about me?"

"I was thinkin' o' many things, Amos, and you among 'em," she said.

"That's all right," I answered: "I'm glad to hear you haven't give up thinkin' about me."

"Why, Amos," she said, "what do you say that for? Am I one to change toward them I care for?"

She looked at me as she said it, and if I could speak as scholars can, I'd tell you how different her look was from any other I ever saw; but I can't, so I won't make a mess of it by trying.

"Meg, my lass," I began, "I've got summat on my mind—summat I must say to you." I leant nearer to her as I spoke, and put my hand on her two. "Let me hold your hands while I tell you, Meggie, though after all there's no need for any tellin'; you must 'a know'd it all along."

I could hear my voice went queer and quivery as I spoke, and I could see in her face that she heard it, too, for she looked a bit scared like, and drew back from me.

"Amos," she said, in a sort of hurry, "I couldn't be quite sure of what you want to say to me; but I can pretty well guess. Don't'ee say it, Amos; it'll be better left unsaid."

"What do you mean by that, Meg?" I cried, firing up. "What I've got to say, I'll say—and you must hear it, becos there's naught but your answer that can settle it."

But she stopped me again.

"Don't be vexed, Amos," she said, softly; "don't take it amiss that I cut you short in what you've begun. Listen to this. As we are we are good friends—arn't we, Amos? just as brother and sister should be; but you might say words, and so might I, that would put all that wrong, and then it 'ud be very hard to pull it to rights again. Can't you understand why I stop you, Amos? It's better for us both—I'm sure it is."

She was right, as she mostly was when we differed, and I was wrong. I knew it at the time, but I wouldn't be shut up.

"Margaret Kerr," I said, "don't say you won't hear me—you shall; it's my right to be heard. Do you think I'm going to drag on day after day, without tellin' you that I don't mean to be brother and sister any longer—that I want you for my wife? Why, lass, it begun ten years ago, what I feel for you did, and it will

last all my life. What can I do but speak of it?"

"And what can I do, Amos," she began, sadly, "but tell you the truth, since you will make me put it quite plain to you? Wife of yours I never can be; my brother you've been as far back as I can remember, and that's all you ever can be."

I'd guessed as much; I'd felt beforehand what her answer was nearly sure to be; but now that I heard it in so many words it put me beside myself. I jumped up and stood over her.

"All you ever can be," I said, after her, "then who's going to take the other place? You've got some one, else why should you know so surely that it can't be me? Is it that pretty-faced, glib-tongued, dandified Henderson, who's always dangling after you, that you've fixed on? You'd needn't say nothin'. It's my turn to guess right now, and want no answer."

I tell all this just as it happened. I know I was a brute, but I make no excuses for myself—I was so angry that I strove to make her cower and tremble. But she didn't—she wasn't that sort. She got up and faced me.

"Amos," she said, "suppose I cared for you as you've asked me to: would you think it fair for another man to come and put me in the wrong for lovin' you?"

"I don't know what I should think if you did care for me," I cried; "the thing is, you don't. I'm not fine gent enough; I'm a dirty, rough workman. I've got into bad ways, and you know it. But he's no better at bottom than I am. He's got the devil of a temper, and he don't love you half as well as I do."

I might ha' said more, but the door opened sharply, and some one spoke from the threshold. It was Mr. Henderson.

"What is this?" he asked, just as if he was boss of the place. "What does this mean?" And he looked from Margaret to me, and from me to Margaret.

"It means that you've come back sooner than we expected you, and sooner than you was wanted," I said.

Him at least I could anger, and I meant to do it.

"Not quite so soon as I was wanted, I should say," he said, as he walked across to where Margaret stood; "but now I have come, I'll trouble you to go and make this tipsey row in a more suitable place."

"Then you'll trouble me to no purpose," I made answer. "I'm no more tipsey than you are yourself, and there's no

man living shall order me out of this room."

"Then if you won't go for asking civilly," he went on, "I shall go so far as to turn you out. I don't allow any one to speak to the girl who has promised to be my wife in the tone you have spoken. There's the door, and the quicker you are on the other side of it the better for you."

Now I don't want to throw the blame on him, at least, not all of it. We hated one another, and he had bested me in the one thing I wanted most in the world. It seems to me that there'd be a deal to say of how things stood at that minute betwixt him and me, if I had larnin' to put it as p-shape, which I haven't.

Meg did not speak. She stood with her eyes on the ground and her bosom heavin'. I could see she was unhappy, and all because o' me; but I hadn't the right to comfort her, and I knew she couldn't take my part nor do anything for me if I stayed there, yet I couldn't demean myself to do his biddin', not even for her sake.

When he'd waited a minute, he said:

"Well, did you hear?"

"I heard right enough," I said, "and if you want my answer, there it is."

I sprang at him as I spoke, with my fist doubled, and my arm raised.

Now if any one had ever told me that I could have been such a brute in front of my little Margaret, I should have sworn it was impossible; but at that moment all I wanted was to strike him down, and to see her crying for fright. He wasn't prepared, neither—even he thought better things of me—and I could have give him a blow on the head that would have half killed him, only she was too quick for me. She put herself between us, holdin' him back with one hand, while she laid the other on my uplifted arm, and still she didn't speak. She only looked at me. Her face was as pale as death, her lips trembled, and her eyes were swimming with tears as she fixed them on mine. It was such a look as might have tamed a wild beast.

"Amos!" she said, in a faint, far-off sort of tone, "Amos!"

That was all; then down went my arm, my fist unclenched, and I forgot that he could see I was conquered. I forgot everything except that I loved her, and that in the depths of her eyes I could see she cared for me still, though she wasn't to be my wife. I tried to say something, but

when I opened my lips nothin' came but a great sob. Then I turned round, and went out of the room, and out of the house, and away out of Cannock altogether. I wasn't goin' to stay there and see Margaret Kerr the wife of Mr. Henderson.

After that I went right away up North, and got work at a Wigan colliery. I heard nothink of any one, for I called myself by another name, and took good care not to let any one know what had become of me. Sometimes, though, I had a bitter longing to go back and see her once again, for I couldn't leave off lovin' her, nor put any one in the place I'd wanted her to take; but I got the better of my home-sickness, and time went on, till it was a matter o' seven 'ear since I'd turned my back on Cannock.

Then one day I was took greatly aback by some one as clapped me on the back, and called me by my own name. It was one of my old mates from the West Can'k pits, and the sight of him made me all of a sudden hungrier for news of her than ever I'd been.

"Come and have 'arf-a-pint for the sake of old times, Amos," says he; and you may think if I went nothink loth.

He hadn't come straight from Cannock; he'd been knockin' about from one pit to another for a couple of years. Nevertheless, he'd plenty to tell me, and I let him go on without venturin' to try and get him to what my ears were burnin' to hear.

"And then there was that little lass you'd used to walk with on Sunday evenings," he said, at last; "her as lived at the 'Cross Keys,' on the Stafford Road. You ain't forgot her among the Lancashire wenches, have you?"

"I warn't likely to have forgot her," I said; "we were kinsfolk."

"Then most likely you know what become of her?" he said.

"I knows nothink whativer," I answered; and I tipped up my mug over my face, so that he shouldn't see if I turned colour.

"Well, you remember young Henderson," he went on, "a nasty sort of chap, in the West Can'k pit? Well, him and her got married, and there was a deal o' talk about the marriage. Some folks said he oughter done better for hisself."

"'Twas 'otther way about, I should say," I put in.

"So should I," he made answer; "but his family thought otherwise. They wouldn't have nothink to do with the lass,

nor with him. That riled him sorely, and as she was nearest to him, she had to bear the brunt of it."

"She was a high-spirited lass," I said; "she wasn't one he could bully. I expect she learnt him better, didn't she?"

"She didn't, my lad. I; seems she were greatly wrapped up in him, and when he began to be unkind to her and neglect her, she couldn't bear it. She couldn't bear it; it broke her heart."

"What do you mean?" I called out. I could scarce keep my head.

"I mean she pined away and died," he said. "If you'd stuck to her, she might ha' been livin' still."

"You know nothink about it, mate," I said. "And what became of yon brute of a Henderson?"

"O, he's at West Can'k still. He's head engineer now at two or three pits, and he's married a fine new wife what drives her pair of ponies."

Then he told me a lot more; but I paid no heed. My head was full of one thought—how I could be even with the scamp as had broken my darlin's heart. All that night I lay a-thinkin', and in the mornin' my mind was made up. I would punish him as he deserved—as Heaven ought to have punished him already, I said to myself. That week end I jacked my job at Wigan, and took the train to Cannock; and on the Monday I went to the pit and found out all about Mr. Henderson: how he came to his office and when he went away, and what road he took; and all without seemin' too much to ask questions. He'd long ago left off livin' in lodgin's, and had lately rented a big, fine house far out on the Chase, and every evening he rode there on his cob along the lonely Chase lanes. Perhaps poor Meg's bit o' money counted for summat in this finery, which she wasn't grand enough for.

It was the month of November, when the days are short and gloomy, and by five o'clock that Monday afternoon it were quite dark—so dark that, if I hadn't known my way on the Chase very well I couldn't have found the place where I meant to be on the look-out for Mr. Henderson. It was a lonely lane which led from the main road to his house, and there, under the shelter of a holly-bush, on a stony slope where he'd have to pull his cob in, and go gently, I stood and listened until I should hear him comin' along. In my right hand I'd got a loaded revolver, and my finger was on the trigger; that was what I was

go in' to punish him with for breakin' Maggie Kerr's heart.

I went through it all as I stood there on the damp grass of the road-side—how the horse would gallop off when he fell; and how he would be found in the morning with a bullet in his heart, and the life gone out of him; and of the joy I should feel that he had paid me at last. It did not trouble me to think that his blood would be on my head for ever and ever; I only said to myself that by Heaven's law his life was owing for hers, and that I would be the one to do her justice.

He was a long time comin'. The clouds cleared off and the stars came out. So much the better. I was hidden where I stood, and he would come riding over the hill against the sky, so that I could make no mistake about him. At last a horse came trottin' along the main road and into the lane. I heard it come nearer and nearer, and I strained my eyes all I could to make positive it was him and no other. Yes, sure enough it was Henderson. I could see him quite plain from my shelter, as he drew rein to go down the hill. He came carefully, holdin' up his horse, and thinkin' of no worse accident than a stum'le over a loose stone. Another three seconds and he would be level with me. My heart thumped inside me like a sledge hammer; the blood fled to my head with a giddy rush. I shut my eyes for half a second to collect myself, and, as I opened them, I raised my arm to shoot.

But I didn't press the trigger, for in that second I had stood with my eyes closed, some one had come betwixt him and me, standin' close up to me, with one hand on my uplifted arm, and, as surely as I tell it you, it was Margaret Kerr, lookin' just as she had looked that last time I had seen her, fixin' her eyes on mine with the big tears swimmin' in them. Her face was as pale as death, but not paler than it had been then, and her sweet mouth seemed drawn with pity. As her hand fell on my arm, a cold thrill ran over me. I could not stir nor speak—neither did her lips move; yet there seemed to ring in my ears a far-off sound of her voice calling my name. My arm dropped to my side, and we stood there—she and I—until down at the bottom of the hill the horse began to trot again. Ralph Henderson had got away with his life, and there was no blood on my head after all. Then I put out my hands to take hold of her—

but there was no one. I was alone in the winter night—

I'm a strong man, and no dastard, but who can wonder that I sank down there and then, like a weak woman, to the ground? I heard my pistol go off as I fell, and there was at the same time an awful burnin' pain through my body. Then I remember no more.

When I came to myself I was lying on a bed in the Stafford Infirmary. I couldn't ask all the questions that came into my head for I was too weak; but bit by bit I learnt how I had been found by the roadside, nearly dead with cold and loss of blood, and how I had been taken to the hospital and cared for. I told nothing myself, though I had many thoughts as I lay there week after week getting well. Some things I pondered over which I can't speak of, for the same reason I've give once or twice before; but there was one thought that stayed by me all the time, which was that Margaret must ha' cared for me still, else why should she ha' come to save me from the deadly deed I was just about? You needn't say she came for his sake—if she had, he'd ha' been the one to see her, which he didn't, for he rode on and never knew what had been hangin' over him nor how he got by safe.

The spring was coming on when I got my discharge from the hospital.

"Let it be a lesson to you how you go about with loaded firearms, my man," the doctor said, the last time I saw him; "we've pulled you through, you see, but it was a nearer shave than you think for."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," I made answer; but I didn't tell him that it was a deal a nearer shave than even he was aware of.

THE TREVERTON MARRIAGE.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XII.

THAT Friday was a fine autumn day; but on the morrow the rain had returned. Beatrix had finished her breakfast when Sir Everard came down, and was busy writing notes in a pocket-book, with her hat on.

"You are very early," he remarked, feeling justly injured, for he was punctual

to time; nine o'clock, their invariable breakfast-hour, was just striking, and the breakfast-table looked horribly desolate with her empty cup.

"The train is at 9.20," she answered, rather abstractedly, for she was adding up a sum.

"You are surely not going to Coaliquay on such a day as this!" he cried, almost angrily.

"The day doesn't matter; I am not going to walk there. I must go as I have appointments."

"It is absolute nonsense. I cannot allow such a thing; you will catch your death of cold."

"Indeed, I shall not; I am not such a tender plant."

"Beatrice, you must not go," he said, determinedly, exasperated by the determined way in which she went on with her calculations and lists.

"But I really must," she returned, looking up with alarm and appeal in her face, that were surely out of place where nothing more important than dentists and dress-makers were concerned. "I shall not take cold. I have my very warmest and most watertight things on. There are plenty of cabs to be had there. How can I catch cold?"

"It is simply preposterous," he persisted; "you cannot go."

"Everard, think of the dentist's time—and the poor servants coming to see me," she urged, almost tearfully. Her eagerness seemed extraordinarily out of proportion with her errand.

"Send them telegrams. There are plenty of days coming; your teeth don't look as if they were in a very precarious condition."

"And would you have me wait till they did look it? There is really a little hole in one; the whole tooth will turn black if it is not stopped in time. Would you like to see me with black teeth—like Madge Singleton's?"

The mention of the Singletons instantly recalled the opera to him, and his suspicions of the dark stranger, who might have been an Italian; but he put them aside. She would surely not disobey his expressed wish, and go to the opera. His confidence in her obedience was greatly strengthened by remembering that she could not go in the afternoon. Matinées were unheard of at Coaliquay.

"Beatrice, once for all, I forbid you to go," he said, sternly.

She dropped her notes and stared at him in utter consternation—not in anger nor disappointment.

"Don't do that!" she cried, in a scared way that turned his blood quite cold with dread. "Everard, I cannot disobey you; but please—please let me go to-day!"

Her insistence naturally doubled his determination that she should not go. His suspicions were of the vaguest; he could formulate nothing; but he could not help seeing that she was keeping something back, and he felt convinced that her secret was connected with the stranger of yesterday. Her face was flushed, her eyes were shining through unshed tears. People don't usually cry at missing an appointment with a dentist—quite the other way.

"You are not going to-day," he said, sullenly, taking up his letters.

He tried to read them, but though he nailed his eyes to the written lines he saw none of them. He only saw his wife sitting by the fire, rigid in thought, her lips pressed together, a frown between her dark eyebrows. He began to grow uncomfortable. What if she were thinking him a tyrant, an unreasonable, fidgety old man—afraid of a draught and a drop of rain? He was always so anxious that she should find him none the worse husband for his twenty-seven years of seniority; that he should not act as a wet blanket, a drag upon her youth. Her obedience touched him. Helena would not have submitted so had he crossed her will—or Helena's mother either. Poor girl, she was very young, and it was dull to live in the country alone with an elderly man, unless that man were a marvel of amiability. She had no doubt looked forward to her day's shopping; she had made all her plans; she was very strong in her healthy youth, and did not catch cold easily. He was just considering how to give her her own way without demoralising inconsistency, when the footman came to announce the carriage.

"I don't want it; I am not going to-day," she said.

He could not make up his mind in time. The footman vanished.

"Poor Trix," he said, kindly, "you are disappointed. It really would have been folly to go on such a day, with a hole in your tooth. You certainly would have had agonies of toothache. Come, let us send the necessary telegrams. You shall go the first fine day."

"Telegrams won't do any good," she said, dolefully.

"Ob, yes, they will. Tell the dentist you will go next Saturday, if fine; tell the cooks and housemaids the same. I want to go next Saturday myself, so we can go together and make a day of it."

"Servants won't keep. I must write a letter about them," she said, and with her words a sudden light came to her perturbed face. "William can ride to Monkchester with them; he will just catch the 10.30 post."

"You can write them here," said Sir Everard, as she rose to leave the room.

"No; I have something to seek," she murmured, hurriedly, and left him.

She went to her own room, and sat down at her writing-table. She got out her paper and then paused.

"I don't feel sure about his name, and he gave no address at all," she said to herself. "It is very awkward. I must just trust to it reaching him somehow."

She wrote; but not to a cook or a dress-maker. She addressed an envelope to "Mr. Watson, care of the Editor of 'The Coaliquay Express.'" Then she wrote:

"Lady Treverton begs to inform Mr. Watson that having considered the subject on which he spoke to her yesterday, she must decline to allow her name to be used for such a purpose, and trusts that it is not too late to stop the publication of those details which she gave him under the influence of surprise, but which the opportunity of a little reflection would certainly have bidden her withhold. She is willing to pay double the price promised by the newspapers, that her name may be kept out of them. She intended to call to-day at the 'Express' office, supposing Mr. Watson to be on the staff of that paper, but was prevented by the weather."

She rang, and gave the letter to a servant, with the order that it should be sent at once to the Monkchester post office. Then she returned to her husband in the dining-room.

"You have got your business settled!" he asked, kindly. "Squared the artists in teeth, millinery, and gastronomy?"

"I quite forgot," she exclaimed, pulling the bell. "Tell William to wait; there are other letters to go," she ordered.

Then she hurried to the writing-table in the window. She filled up two telegraph forms, and then wrote a hurried letter to the manager of the register office.

"I am going to the stables; give them to me," said Sir Everard. "There is just time."

She gave them into his hand, and he walked off with them. He glanced at the address of the letter mechanically; then, as he crossed the hall, more attentively. The telegrams were in an open envelope, crammed in so hurriedly that one was sticking half out. He took them out to fold them more tidily, and saw they were addressed to the dentist and the dress-maker.

"Here are the letters," he said to the groom; "one letter and two telegrams, and see you lose no time."

"Two letters, sir," corrected William, taking the first letter from his pocket, and putting the others with it. "Her ladyship sent this first."

Sir Everard did not see the address, and could not bring himself to make an excuse to look at it. The groom mounted his horse and rode off.

"Whom has she written to besides?" he pondered. "The first was evidently the important letter."

But the important letter never reached Mr. Watson. It was to return to Lady Treverton through the dead-letter office ten days later. He had posted his copy the night before to the London and Wellingby papers, being an industrious young man—though he had no connection whatever with "The Coaliquay Express"—and anxious to turn an honest penny in any direction. He also posted a letter to Mr. Cullingworth.

"DEAR BOB,—I have interviewed her ladyship since sounding the neighbourhood, as I reported in my last. There is certainly something to be made out of her antecedents if the other line should fail. She got very red at my hinting at a previous marriage, and at the mention of her having called herself Mrs. Lyon. But I think you will get your case out of Sir Everard, and her ladyship's mysteries need not be gone into yet. I have seen an old aunt of Emily Stort, who was very fond of the girl, and who declares her conviction that Sir Everard married her, and that it is quite possible that she may not be dead. She showed me a fanciful sort of silk Indian shawl which had come to her mysteriously, without any clue to the sender, except the postmark on the paper it was wrapped in. The postmark is Indian, the date July, 1865—the very year Sir Everard left England after his

first wife's death. Miss Wilkins, the aunt, declares that no one but Emily would have sent it; and also, that Emily would not have died without sending her some intimation; whether before or after the fact, Miss Wilkins does not say. Out of her rambling story I gathered that she had aided and abetted Captain Treverton in his love affair, and, consequently, had quarrelled with the girl's parents on the subject, who had never believed in the Captain's honourable intentions, and had, therefore, blamed the ambitious aunt for all that happened.

"Where the hitch comes in is, why was the aunt silent? If she really believed her niece to be married to Sir Everard Treverton, why did she keep it a secret? This mystery still remains to be solved. If it fails, I shall set to work upon the Beatrix scent. Yours ever,

"NED."

Not quite the letter of a clerk to his employer, much less that of a detective to the solicitor who was making use of him. In fact, Mr. Edward Watson was Mr. Cullingworth's younger brother, who had taken up the private enquiry line of business, but who, for the sake of his brother's reputation, worked under a different name.

A week went by—a very dreary week of rain, alternating with damp dullness outside; of doubting division, alternating with strangely sorrowful tenderness within.

Beatrix sat alone in her beautiful drawing-room, feeling it as dreary as a cavern in the desert, musing on the mistake of her life—her marriage. What a beautiful, happy life she had pictured, living there with her handsome, cultivated, adoring husband, whose years only gave him superiority! What a wonderful thing it had seemed to her, one day when Sir Everard had taken her and Mrs. Dudley over the house, that this very drawing-room should be hers; that it should be her home, not a mere show to her; that the stately portraits on the walls—Holbeins, Vandycks, Lelys, Gainsboroughs—should become not mere historical characters, but near relations, her children's forefathers; that her tea should be set on one or other of the dainty Chippendale tables—tables round which great ladies in sacques and powder had gossiped, on which they had gambled half the Treverton lands away; that she should poke the fires that would

burn in the middle of those surroundings.

It was far beyond her wildest flights of imagination that familiarity with these wonderful things should bring indifference which was almost contempt; that though she bore the name and title of those lovely painted ladies in satin and powder, she should feel as if she had no more lot and part with them and theirs than any tourist from Monkchester or Coaliquay, who came to see over the Chase on show days.

Had the disparity of rank and education between Beatrix Lyon and the stately Trevertons been so great as to be beyond bridging even by marriage with the head of the family? Was Sir Everard aware of it, now the first heat of his love was past, and the hurry of their marriage was over, and there was time and light to see fairly? Was he repenting the exchange he had made of his devoted daughter for a stranger? Was he blaming his new wife for the estrangement? Surely there must have been some fault on her side, or Helena would not have resented the marriage so bitterly.

Was she to pay the penalty of having mated her sparrow-like insignificance with eagles, by being pecked to death by petty tyrannies and unreasonable interferences? Why had Sir Everard been so obstinate in forbidding that expedition to Coaliquay? Did he mean to stop every plan, however harmless, that he himself had not originated? He had disappointed her of Venice, all for no reason; he had been unkind and unsympathetic when she had wished to help the poor Princess at Bigorre and again at Coaliquay. There was no doubt about it—their marriage had been too hurried. She had had no idea of these despotic tendencies. They ought to have known more of each other.

And Sir Everard in the library? What of the home that had been the home of his fathers and of his whole life? Desolation had come upon it. Helena, his darling, had become his open enemy. Beatrix, for whom he had lost her, was divided from him; a gulf to be felt rather than seen lay between them. Harassed to death by Mr. Key's letters telling him of Helena's extraordinary investigations, that must lead only to shame and sorrow, and yet to an end of which she could not dream; indignant beyond expression at hearing from the Monkchester lawyers of the gossip afloat about his wife; feeling bound,

for his sake, and the sake of his own dignity, to take no notice of such buzzing of rustic gnats, even by showing consciousness of it in his manner of treating his neighbours. He told himself that if only he and Beatrix had been able to share each other's full confidence, he would have cared nothing for all these annoyances, but that without her help he must soon go crazy.

There was no doubt about it. There could not be full sympathy where there was such a disparity of age between them. Their marriage had been a mistake; it was too hurried; they had known nothing of each other. She evidently looked upon him as a jealous old tyrant, from whom she must keep her little secrets. He was too old to understand them and to sympathise.

But when they met in the firelit hour before dressing, that Beatrix loved to prolong, and he let her give him tea in the dainty old cups his mother had loved, and he looked into her kind, honest face, the deep, true eyes so tender and anxious in the firelight, all his love rushed over these barriers of perplexity and remorse, and he knew that she was worth losing all the world for, and that no cost was too great to pay for her, and that if only this worry of Helena's were over, which so unhinged his mind, there would be perfect joy, perfect trust, perfect sympathy, perfect union at last and for ever between them, and his heart would become young like hers.

Such an hour of peace and happiness they had on the Friday evening of that tiresome wet week. He had come to take his tea as usual from his wife sitting in the firelight. She had been half asleep when he came in, and he had the rare joy of meeting the loving delight in her waking eyes at seeing him, before she had brought her drowsy mind to remember the cruel little misunderstandings of the past days.

He fixed that loving look upon her eyes, before it had had time to change or vanish, by meeting it with the gladness of his own. He stooped over her, and kissed her tenderly twice.

"All this evening to ourselves, dear," he said, exultation mingled with the deep content of his tone, as if an evening with his wife were quite a stolen pleasure.

"It is delightful," she answered, pouring out his tea, while he took his place beside her on one of the little red chairs that had

audaciously introduced themselves amongst the Chippendales and Sheratons.

"Not so delightful for you, poor child," he said, with an anxious glance at her bright face, "to be shut up with an old man; and I fear it will be the forerunner of many dull evenings now the bridal dinner-parties are coming to an end."

"You are fishing for compliments, and I won't encourage it," she laughed. "You see, the wild excitement of Moorlandshire dinner-parties, and the high pitch of culture attained in the conversation there, brings a strain too great to be borne for long by commonplace minds. There was an invitation to lunch at the Singletons' to-morrow; it was such a relief to have to tell them we were engaged."

"And are we? I had forgotten. I was congratulating myself on a prospect of peace at any rate until over Sunday."

"We are going to Coalquay to-morrow!" she reminded him, in reproachful surprise.

"But that could have easily been put off!"

"Why, surely you do not want to go to the Singletons'!" she exclaimed, astonished.

"I don't want you to offend people," he answered, uneasily. "They have been a long time in asking us."

"All the more reason why we should not cheapen ourselves by going too readily. Such a shabby invitation, too; lunch—and only a day's notice! Besides, you said you were obliged to go to Coalquay to-morrow."

"Not obliged; a letter or a later day might have done. It does not matter, though; they have been rude in asking us so tardily; and lunch is a very informal matter."

It was a very happy evening. For the first time they were both really at home. The weather, too, had changed at last; a glorious flood of moonlight made the outdoor night almost day. They sat by the window to admire it—Beatrix in a black oak chair, her head against a cushion of golden Indian work, looking quite beautiful as the lustrous whiteness bathed her earnest face, her statuesque neck and arms, and lit mystic lights in the depths of her fathomless eyes; Sir Everard, watching not so much the marvellous moon-washed distances of fell and forest as the moonlit eyes and lips of his wife. How grand, how noble she looked in her plain, black velvet gown, the low, square-cut edges

lying unrelieved against the dazzling pearliness of her neck! A woman to trust with his love, with his life, with his honour; a woman worthy to sit in the place of the stately ladies whose portraits hung round.

After her wondering admiration of the moonlight, and his pointing-out of distant landmarks, distinctly visible, a long silence fell upon them—as upon Paolo and Francesco, when they “read no more that day.” But that silence was very full of voices—whispers of the last leaves of autumn, as the soft wind shook them down, whispers of soul to soul.

“How silly I am to think he is tired of me, and full of petty despotism!” was the whisper Beatrix heard. “I have had too much of my own way all my life; that is why it seems to me such an unheard-of thing to find another will in the way of mine. I must remember that my promise of obedience was not an empty form, and that he may sometimes know better than I do what is right. Then all our lives will be as happy as this evening.”

“Why do I chafe and depress her so by objecting to everything she wants to do, if I do not see reason of it, or, seeing, am not satisfied? Can I not trust her? But it is Helena’s fault. I am not myself. My mind is worn and worried by her vagaries. If only this trouble were past, all our lives will be as happy as this evening. But alas! she is laying up unthought-of sorrow for herself, poor girl; and how can I stop it? It is enough to send a man mad to think of it.”

Beatrix became conscious that the calm, deep content had given place to restless anxiety; the touch of his hand told her. She turned her face and saw the worried look had returned.

“Let us come to the fire again,” she said.

“Sing to me, Beatrix.”

She went to the piano, and looked some music.

“I want some new songs,” she said. “You must be tired of these old things.”

“I never tire of old English ballads and Scotch songs. Sing what you sang at the Blakes’ last night, that lovely song of Hook’s—‘Listen, listen to the voice of love,’ was it not?”

“Oh! Everard, I was so ashamed of it! Did you not think it was a fiasco? I am so out of practice.”

“You must have some lessons.”

“Lessons! It seems such ages since I had singing lessons; not since——”

She paused abruptly, and dropped the music-book on the keys. It fell with a hideous discord. Perhaps it was that discord that went on vibrating, for the harmony of the evening was over. Beatrix selected the next song she came upon, and sang it without another word. Perhaps it was for want of lessons and practice, perhaps it was not a pretty song, perhaps she was thinking of something else, something unpleasant while she sang it; but Sir Everard did not enjoy it.

“I cannot sing,” she said, impatiently, when she had come to the end. “I think I have caught cold. I will try to find some nice new songs at Coalquay to-morrow.”

“You cannot go if you have caught cold.”

“Why are you so averse to my going to Coalquay?” she asked, petulantly. “Everything seems capable of being made into a reason for stopping it. One would say you had heard the train was to be wrecked by dynamite, or that you had had some ghostly prophetic warning against it; and it is only for a little commonplace, uneventful shopping.”

“One would think you were engaged in some secret conspiracy there; you are so extraordinarily bent on going, at any cost,” he said, crossly.

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